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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000506

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR
DRL
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DEA FOR THE ADMINISTATOR
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR JEFFREY LEVINE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/30/2011
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: PREVAL HIGHLIGHTS DRUG-TRAFFICKING WITH CODEL PRICE

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons
1.4(b) and (d).

11. Summary: President Preval on February 23 focused his meeting with CODEL Price on narcotics trafficking, thanking the delegation for their efforts to assist the Haitian parliament, but devoting most of the rest of the 75-minute meeting to a discussion of the threat that drugs pose to Haitian stability and the need for the U.S. to do more to interdict drug flow into Haiti. Preval stated that the influence of narcotics traffickers threatened any economic and political progress in Haiti. For this reason he had pushed for a regional drug summit (taking place in Santo Domingo on March 16) but lamented that he did not see high-level U.S. participation. As a consuming country, it is the U.S.' responsibility to intercept drugs from South America before they arrive in Haiti, and unfair of the U.S. to criticize Haiti in the narcotics cooperation certification process. When asked what specific measures Preval suggested to improve cooperative efforts, Preval responded that he was not an expert, but that the solution must be regional. If the U.S. cannot do more to help, Preval ventured, he would have to consider legalizing their transport through Haiti. In response to a final question from Rep. Price regarding MINUSTAH's future, Preval criticized MINUSTAH performance on security, focusing on their failure to capture gang-leaders in recent large-scale anti-gang operations. Despite post's efforts to educate Preval that bilateral cooperation is the only effective means to combat drug trafficking in Haiti, he remains fixed in his view that the U.S. must unilaterally solve Haiti's drug problem and is stubbornly resistant to engaging on a more practical and collaborative approach. End Summary.

Welcome, Now About Drugs...

12. (SBU) President Preval on February 23 met at the national palace with visiting Representatives David Price (D-North Carolina), Bobby Rush (D-Illinois), and Wayne Gilchrest (R-Maryland), who led a CODEL to provide assistance and training to the Haitian parliament. President Preval thanked his guests for their efforts to aid the parliament (post will

report on Preval's comments regarding the parliament septel) and quickly steered the meeting toward the impact of narcotics trafficking in Haiti. Responding to Rep. Price's question regarding the recently enacted HOPE legislation (allowing increased access for Haitian textiles to the U.S. market), Preval responded that any benefits coming from HOPE and any other development initiative would be endangered unless the issue of drug-trafficking is not addressed. Drug traffickers thrive under a weak state, and they would fight attempts to develop government capacity.

What Have You Done For Us?

13. (SBU) For this reason, Preval continued, he had suggested that Dominican President Fernandez host a regional drug summit in Santo Domingo that would now occur on March 17. The idea had started between three heads of state, but on the most recent agenda he noted that at least five heads of state would address the summit, himself, President Fernandez, President Uribe of Colombia, Prime Minister Miller of Barbados, and Prime Minister Simpson of Jamaica. He regretted that there was one important regional partner missing, the United States. The producing country and the transit countries would address the issue, but the biggest consumer was not doing enough. How many DEA agents, he asked the Ambassador, were posted in Haiti? Responding to the Ambassador's answer that there were three agents in country, he complained that for too long there had been only one. Haiti simply did not have the resources to confront drug traffickers and the U.S. had the responsibility and obligation to assist Haiti, rather than simply use the narcotics cooperation certification process to criticize the GoH.

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14. (SBU) Preval said that what Haiti needed instead was more direct support from the United States -- more DEA agents in Haiti to support the Haitian police with more airplanes and boats between South America and Haiti to interdict the incoming drug shipments. Responding to Rep Rush's question regarding specific steps beyond asking for U.S. resources, President Preval replied that he was not a law-enforcement expert, but that any action must be regional. Absent a broader approach, Preval stressed, he would not put his own life on the line by trying to arrest the powerful traffickers in Haiti.

Extradition, Shmextradition

15. (C) Responding to Rep. Price's question whether drug trafficking made his job governing Haiti more difficult, Preval answered that he had to presume that corruption was widespread throughout the police and the judiciary. In the south of the country, the police are directly involved in picking up the drug shipments and transporting them onward. He noted that the Haitians currently in jail in the U.S. had been in the highest levels of government, including a former senate president (Jean Marie Fourel Celestin) and a former head of palace security (Oriol Jean). The corruption, he concluded, affected the entire government. The Ambassador raised the issue of Haitian citizens that the U.S. government had indicted in the U.S., and our continued interested in seeking a way to bring these people to justice despite Haiti's constitutional prohibition against extraditing Haitian citizens. "We admit," Preval answered, "that we cannot extradite our citizens. Does this mean that you cannot move forward in other areas?" (Comment: Preval feigned great surprise at the Ambassador's mention of a list of Haitians sought by U.S. justice saying, "This is the first time I have heard of a list," and walked over to the Ambassador to extend his hand to receive the list. This pantomime prompted him to review the list of the formerly powerful now in jail in the U.S. Preval seemed to imply that

rendering these people to U.S. justice could not be so important, since they were all in custody and drug trafficking continued unabated in Haiti. He was so taken aback, however, when the Ambassador was not immediately familiar with the case of Jacques Ketant, a drug kingpin rendered to the U.S. by Arisitide in June 2003 that he lost his train of thought. End Comment.)

Unhappy with MINUSTAH, too

¶6. (C) Concluding the meeting, Rep. Price asked for President Preval's assessment of the MINUSTAH mission. Preval allowed that MINUSTAH's presence had been indispensable in allowing Haiti to consolidate its democracy, but complained that in terms of current security needs MINUSTAH isn't doing enough, and what it was doing was not effective. "How is it," Preval asked rhetorically, "that the media filmed and interviewed the gang leaders and yet MINUSTAH was unable to arrest them?" Seven hundred soldiers participated in the operations last week and they will probably do something next week, but what good is it if they can't catch the leaders. The first requirements to combat the gangs were intelligence and police. MINUSTAH did not have enough of either. The mission also needs more engineers and development workers who can improve the lives of the people. In this regard, Preval summed up, I agree with the Chinese permanent representative's comments regarding the recent renewal of MINUSTAH's mandate: the entire mission should be re-evaluated.

¶7. (C) Comment: While his tone throughout the meeting with the CODEL was cordial, Preval has evinced increasing impatience and irritability on the issue of counter-narcotics cooperation over the past months. This may be related to some overarching issue or concern of which we are unaware -- the same impatience and irritability he displays of late

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regarding MINUSTAH is simply baffling. MINUSTAH's failure to catch the top gang-leaders notwithstanding, Preval has every reason to be pleased by MINUSTAH's recent performance. End Comment

¶8. (U) Representative Price cleared this message.

¶9. (C) Additional Comment: Subsequent to drafting this message, in a meeting with DEA Administrator Tandy on March 7, Preval's attitude was much more constructive. He thanked Tandy for DEA efforts and asked that more DEA resources be dedicated to Haiti. SRSG Mulet also reported that Preval has been much more positive and complementary toward MINUSTAH in subsequent meetings. We hope that Preval's more recent attitude will mark his approach at the regional narcotics summit in Santo Domingo, and that he will focus on mutual agreement on a way forward to enhance regional anti-narcotics cooperation. End Comment
SANDERSON